

THE  
P R O G R E S S  
O F  
P H Y S I C :  
A  
P O E M.

WITH  
NOTES and OBSERVATIONS from antient A U T H O R S.

---

By a P H Y S I C I A N.

---

*[A. Corbett]*  
*Tantæ molis erat -----* VIRG.

*----- operosa parvus*

*Carmina fingo.* HOR.

---

L O N D O N :

Printed for C. CORBET, at *Addison's* Head,  
opposite St. *Dunstan's* Church, *Fleet-Street*.

MDCCCL.

[Price One Shilling.]

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# T H E A R G U M E N T.

**M**EDICINE *artless and simple, much older than*  
*Phyfic exercis'd as an Art.--That and a new Train*  
*of Diseases introduc'd after the Flood, by Luxury.-- Its*  
*Beginning rude. — Sprung up in the Eastern Nations. —*  
*Grounded upon the suppos'd Influence of the Stars. —*  
*Studied and practis'd by the Magi. — Hence it pass'd*  
*into Ægypt, where the Priests still had the chief Exercise*  
*of it. — Their Cures, &c. inscrib'd on the Pillars and*  
*Walls of their Temples. — Particular Branches of the*  
*Science studied by particular Persons. — Hence trans-*  
*planted into Greece, but not brought to any great Degree of*  
*Perfection till Hippocrates's Time, who first made Phyfic*  
*rational. — A short Digression, by way of Encomium on*  
*J. B—ll—e, M. D. — Phyfic next travels into Italy,*  
*brought into Disgrace by Quackery, &c. Galen, at*  
B
length,



*length, explains every thing by the rigid Doctrines of the Peripateticks. — Did a great deal of Mischief, as well as Service, to this noble Art. — Much blam'd for This, but commended for the Pains he took with a View of improving Medicine. — Phyfic lost with other Arts and Sciences when the Goths, &c. over-ran Europe, but revives amongst the Arabs, after some Ages, tho' Galen's Errors still predominant. — Chymistry, the first great Improver of this Science. — Distinguish'd from Alchymy, an Art as old as Tubal Cain. — Another short Digression on the Vanity of hunting after the Philosopher's Stone. — The Discovery, or Demonstration of the Circulation of the Blood, by our Countryman Harvey, fixes Phyfic on a more certain Basis than ever. — That, and Experimental Philosophy, afterwards carried to so great Lengths by Mr. Boyle, brought the Art nearer to Perfection in this Island than can be boasted of by any other Nation. — Phyfic, at length, fixes her Empire in Britain. — Which concludes the Whole.*

( 7 )

THE  
P R O G R E S S  
O F  
P H Y S I C.

L O N G ere *Physicians* knew the *Healing Art*,  
*Disease* to quell—or ease the aching *Heart*—

\* *Med'cine* arose—at first by *Heav'n* design'd

With balmy Wing to *shield*, and *blest* Mankind :

In

\* THE *Injuries* and *Vicissitudes* of the *Air* — The *Nature* and *Qualities* of *Foods* — the *Violence* of external *Bodies* — the *Actions* of *Life* — and lastly, the *Structure* of the *Human Frame*, must have render'd some *Diseases*, and consequently *Medicine*, almost as old as *Mankind*, tho' much chang'd and complicated in *After-Ages*.



In ev'ry *Field* some wholsom *Simple* grew,  
 Its *Use* each ruder *Clown* and *Peasant* knew;  
 Which, cull'd with Care, the wish'd *Assistance* gave;  
 Not prompt to *kill*——if impotent, to *save*——  
 From *Trees*——from *Plants*——the easy *Cure* was sought  
 And from the murm'ring *Rill* Health flow'd *unbought*.  
 The friendly, limpid *Draught*——the temp'rate *Meal*,  
 Ne'er ask'd the *Aid* of *Bolus*——or of *Pill*——  
 With equal *Force* their vig'rous *Pulses* beat,  
 No *Cordials*, then, to raise the *extinguish'd Heat*;  
 No frantic *Mirth*——nor *Melancholly*, then——  
 Heav'n's sharpest *Curse* upon the *Sons of Men*!  
 To calm a *Fever's* Rage no *Arts* were try'd,  
 Till, haply, of the \* *Doctor*——*Patients* dy'd——  
 Feebly, the *Limbs* no slacken'd *Nerves* sustain'd,  
*Hereditary Health*——and *Vigour* reign'd.

BUT say, my *Muse*! these happier Ages past,  
 How *Sickness* and *Disease* broke in at last——

From

\* 'Tis hop'd the *Faculty* will not resent this little *Stroke* of *Satyr*, and one that follows, since they are not *levell'd* at the *Science Itself*, but the *Abuse* of it. —— At *Quacks*, nor *Regular Practisers*.

From *Man* to *Man* how *Plagues* unnumber'd spread,  
When *Physic* rear'd her *Scientific Head*.

Such *Ills* combin'd, what *Mortal* can endure?  
How *Few* out-live the *Sickness*—and the *Cure*?

NOT long the *Flood* had left the Face of *Earth*,  
And lost *Mankind* receiv'd a Second-Birth,  
Ere *Lux'ry* rose— with *Sickness* in her Train—  
And all the frightful *Family* of *Pain*:  
*Nature's* spare *Wants* forsook the homely *Board*,  
With mad *Profusion* see each *Table* stor'd!  
*Invention* labour'd to debauch the *Treat*,  
And whet the jaded *Appetite* to eat:  
Intoxicating *Wines*, henceforth, began  
T' inflame the *Blood*— not chear the *Heart* of *Man*:  
Hence *Gout* and *Stone* afflict the *Human Race*;  
Hence lazy *Faundice*—with her *Saffron Face*—  
*Palsy*, with shaking *Head*, and tott'ring *Knees*,  
And bloated *Dropsy*— the stanch *Sot's Disease*!  
*Consumption* pale, with keen, but hollow *Eye*,  
And sharpen'd *Feature*, shew'd that *Death* was nigh—  
The feeble *Offspring* curse their crazy *Sires*,  
And, tainted from his *Birth*, the *Youth* expires.



FIRST, thro' the *East*, in social *League*, we find  
 The sage *Physician* to the *Priesthood* join'd—  
*Physic*, alone, the Rev'rend *Magi* knew ;  
 Its first *Inventors* — and *Corruptors* too —  
 On *Stars*, and *Planets*, the rude *Art* they found,  
 And tread, *inglorious!* on *enchanted Ground*;  
 Nor dar'd the healing *Med'cine* to apply,  
 If \* *Saturn* glanc'd with a *malignant Eye*.  
 To *Ægypt* next *Physic* directs her *Flight*,  
 There prun'd her *Wing*, and blest'd a clearer *Light* ;  
 O'er her fair *Face* no artful *Veil* was thrown,  
 Nor only from huge *Volumes* was she known,  
 On † *Marble* sculptur'd — and the faithful *Stone* :  
 Recording *Temples* did at once insure  
 The *Leech's Fame*—and propagate the *Cure*.  
 Nor *Each* to ev'ry *Branch* as yet applies —  
 But *This* the *Heart* could cure, and *That* the *Eyes* ;

The

\* THE *Chaldeans* were the first *Astronomical Observators*, and are suppos'd to have built their *Notions* of *Physical Matters* upon *Astrological Grounds*—either the *Influence* of a particular *Planet*, or of some *Tutelar Dæmon*, were still consider'd.—Hence this *Superstitious Practice*, with the *Science Itself*, was deriv'd to the *Ægyptians*.—

† SEE *Wotton* on *Ancient and Modern Learning*, P. 107.



The ulcer'd *Limb* some only knew to *heal*,  
While *Female Patients* blest'd another's *Skill*.

HERE flourish'd long the *Pharmaceutic Art*;  
Whence *Commerce*, next, the *Science* did impart  
To ancient *Greece* — but slow its *Progress* still —  
Rude and imperfect yet the *Medicinal Skill*:  
When, lo! *Apollo's* fav'rite *Son* arose,  
The Depths of *Physic* studious to *disclose*;  
\**Hippocrates* — who with a purer *Ray*  
Beam'd on his *Followers* a brighter *Day*.  
By *simplest* Methods, *slow* indeed, but *sure*,  
Who first prescrib'd the *Dietetic Cure*:  
Hence stubborn *Chronics* dwindled by Degrees,  
And *Food* grew *Health* — that late was the *Disease*;  
The *Fever's* Rage, obedient to *subside*,  
*Life's* purple *Current* pour'd a gentler *Tide*!

Honey

\* BEING a Master of *Experience* as well as of *Analogy* and *Reason*, and withal vers'd in pure *Philosophy*, he first made *Physic* rational, and laid the *Foundation* of the *Dogmatic* Medicine which has since obtain'd. — He press'd no *Hypothesis* into his Service, as may be seen in his Book of *Diseases*, *Affections*, &c. — He first started the Doctrine of *Critical Days* in *Diseases*; for which, when *Polytheism* was in vogue, they were ready to take him for a *God*. — 'Tis certain none of the *Physicians* of Old *Greece* follow'd any *Theory* — Of whom *Baglivi* says:—*Quod nos per Leges Theoriæ, id Illi solâ mentis perspicacitate, longo Ufu confirmatâ peragebant.* —

*Honey and Milk* the sole *Specifics*, then  
 The mild *Decoction*—and the cool *Ptisan*—  
 From *Nature's* Source he drew unerring *Laws*;  
 Such *B—ll—e's* Practice now—such \* *Syd'nam's* was.—

O *B—ll—e*! if these *Numbers* reach thine Ear,  
 Accept this *Tribute*—as Thyself sincere—  
 Forgive the *Muse* officious thus t'employ  
 Those *Hours* of *Health* you help her to enjoy:  
 How *Few*, like *Thee*, such diff'rent *Virtues* blend,  
 And mix the *True Physician* with the *Friend*?  
 In whom thy *Classic Taste* and *Learning* join,  
 T' instruct, t' adorn—to polish and refine—  
 How *Few* like *Thee*, with kindred *Sorrow* melt,  
 And weep those *Evils* which they never felt?  
*Balm* to my *Woe*—and *Comfort* in *Distress*!  
*Living* I'll love *Thee*—and shall, *Dying*, blest.

SUCH was the *Medic Art*—O shame to tell  
 What yet the Faithful *Muse* must now reveal!

Nurs'd

\* *ARTIS nostræ Ornator & Ornamentum, qui se positus Opinionum Commentis ad Observationes prorsus se dedit, & a primâ Ætate ad Extremum usque senium cum Naturâ cohabitavit*—says a learned *Foreigner*.—



Nurs'd long in *Græcian Climes* with tend'rest Care,  
 She *Westward* fled — and breath'd a \* *Roman Air* —  
 But *soon*, alafs ! her new-blown *Honours* fade,  
 Her rising Lustre base *Impostors* shade,  
 By *Roman M---f---b---ns* and *W---ds* betray'd.  
*Rome* had her *Quacks* — for such all *Climes* produce —  
 The *Bane* of Science — and its worst *Abuse* —  
 No *Mead* — no *Hulse* was then — the Art to save —  
 It sunk — *detested* by the *Wise* and *Brave*.

GALEN, at length, review'd the sacred *Plan*,  
 And to *collect* its scatter'd *Parts* began ;  
 Greedy of *Fame*, digested 'em with Care —  
 Well were it, had his *Labours* ended there —  
 But boasting clearer *Lights*, he tack'd to *These*  
 Strange *Humours* — *Elements* — and *Qualities* —

\* PLINY says the *Romans* had an *Aversion* to *Physicians*, and their *Art*, till *Archagatus* came from *Greece* to *Rome*, where he practis'd *Physic* and *Surgery* with *Reputation* — in the Year of *Rome* 535. — However, 'tis certain the *Art* was sunk very low in the *Opinion* of the *Romans* before that Time, by the *Roguary* and *Ignorance* of *Quacks*. — None but *Freed-Men*, &c. practis'd for a long Course of Years. —

Confounding, thus, the † *Coan Master's Rule*,  
 With the rude *Cant* of *Aristotle's School*;  
 Of *Observation* left the fruitful *Fields*,  
 For the wild *Waste* that \* *Speculation* yields:  
 A *Fairy-Land*—and a neglected *Shore*—  
 No *Æsculapian Sage* ere trod before—  
*Experience* now held but the second Place,  
 And *Truths*, best founded on her solid *Base*.  
 No more—O sad *Reverse*! in one we view  
 The watchful ‡ *Nurse*, and wise *Physician* too—  
 Subtle t' *explode*—as artful to *invent*—  
 By Midnight Lamps a *Galen's* Hours were spent,  
 Some fav'rite *System* anxious to *maintain*,  
 The monstrous *Child* of his prolific *Brain*—  
 By dark *Solutions* to out-strip the *Wise*,  
 And ere the *Race* was run—to snatch the *Prize*.

THUS

† Cos, or Coos, an Island in the *Archipelago*, where *Hippocrates* was born.—  
 Hence so called.—

\* SI excipias (says a learned Author) Paucos illos Observatores, qui Casus & Historias Medicas ad visum prout, ab ipsâ Rei Naturâ procedebant, describendo, Medicinæ pomœria summopere ampliarunt; ea quæ Reliqui adjecere, falsam Theoriâm, & hujusmodi Ineptias spectantia, turbarunt potius, impediveruntque illius Progressus, quam indicarunt aut promoverunt.—

‡ IN *Hippocrates's* Time, and after, the most eminent *Physicians* watch'd almost *Day and Night* by their Patients *Bed-Sides*, and stuck close to *Observation*,—  
 Whence called the *Clinic Sect*.—



THUS far the *Muse*, reluctant, dares to blame  
Whom † *sixteen Hundred Years* have giv'n to *Fame*;  
Pleas'd she proceeds—still ardent to commend—  
*Foe* to his *Faults*—but to his *Worth* a *Friend*.

IF unknown *Worlds* of *Med'cine* to explore,  
T' expound their *Virtues*, and increase their *Store*;  
In search of *Truth*, if any Praise it be,  
To drain the *Mines* of deep *Philosophy*;  
Of known *Effects* to trace the hidden *Cause*,  
And scan by Rules of *Art* wise Nature's *Laws*;  
By *Envy's* self the *Debt* shall sure be paid,  
And latest *Honours* dignify his *Shade*.

WHAT Time the \**Gothic Swarms* forsook their *Hive*,  
*Learning* no longer cou'd the *Shock* survive;

Of

† GALEN flourish'd in the Time of *Trajan*, and three succeeding *Emperors*.—He wrote 15 *Volumes*, besides *Notes*, on *Hippocrates*—and died at *Rome*, *Anno Dom.* 140.—

\* AFTER the *sixth Century*, the Arts were not only extinguish'd, but almost all *Memory* of them lost till the *Ninth*, from which to the *Thirteenth* *Medicine* was vigorously cultivated by the *Arabs* in *Asia*, *Africa*, and *Spain*: Who applying Themselves particularly to the Study of the *Materia Medica*, and its *Preparations*, and to the *Operations* of *Chirurgery*, render'd both more just and copious at the same time — and yet *Galen's Errors* became now more predominant than ever.—

Of Human *Art* no *Traces* we descry,  
*Art's* fairest *Fruit*, and *Learning* wither'd lie :  
 Defac'd—o'erthrown—and mingled with the *Dust*—  
 The labour'd *Column*—and the breathing *Bust*.—  
*Chaos* return'd--- all *Peace* and *Order* fled—  
 O'er *Customs*, *Language*, *Laws*, thick *Night* was spread.  
 'Till---as some long-lost *Stream* renews its *Source*,  
 Which under-ground pursu'd its mazy *Course*—  
*Science*, again, to happier *Climes* restor'd,  
 Unveil'd her *Charms*---and was again ador'd.

THE fable *Night* of *Ignorance* withdrawn,  
 From blest'd *Arabia* broke the chearful *Dawn* ;  
 Of *Med'cine*, lo! the long uncultur'd *Field*  
 Began to *smile*, and a new *Harvest* yield ;  
 On *Afric's* settled, and *Iberia's* Shore,  
 The *Saracens* reviv'd the *Art* once more :  
 But *Galen's* Errors chose the wholesome *Soil*,  
 Obstruct its *Progress*---and confound their *Toil*.

NEXT *Chymistry*, which long in *Embrio* lay,  
 Started new *Lights*---and smooth'd the thorny *Way* ;

Not,



Not, as of Old, to \* *Alchymy* confin'd,  
 Nor knew t' *enrich*, alone, but *bless* Mankind.  
 Long had she learnt t' extract the shining *Ore*,  
 But *Med'cine* now confess'd her *healing Pow'r*.  
 A new *Creation* open'd to the *View*,  
 And old *Discov'ries* were confirm'd by new.

SEE by his *Fires* the sooty *Artist* sweat,  
 To pass th' eternal *Bound* by *Nature* set!  
 Mis-led by *Aristotle's* dazzling *Light*,  
 For † *Transmutation* labours Day and Night!  
 In quest of *Mountains* of imagin'd *Wealth*,  
 His *Fortune* ruin—and destroy his *Health*—

\* ALCHYMY, as contra-distinguish'd by some Writers from *Chymistry*, consisted in refining Metals, and extracting them from their *Ores*.—This Art, older than the *Flood*, is ascrib'd to *Tubal Cain*—Gen. iv. 22.—It is but of late that *Chymistry* has been applied to the Preparations of Medicines, and extended to *Plants, Animals, Minerals*, &c.—*Paracelsus* and *Van Helmont* carried it to such a length, as to render *Medicine* almost wholly *Chymical*.—

† ACCORDING to *Aristotle, Epicurus*, &c. *Gold* and *Sand* are at bottom but one and the same *Matter*.—The *Chymists* thought they had found out that *Salt—Sulphur—* and *Mercury—* with a few other *Ingredients*, (about which they are not as yet agreed) were the immediate *Elements* of all *Bodies*; but that there was in reality a *primitive Matter* which took all sorts of *Forms*—that consequently, nothing remain'd to be done, but to work upon that *primitive Matter*, to present it with fit *Moulds*, and to give it a certain *Turn* to have *Gold—Jewels—* and the *Elixir Salutis*.—This *Study* has been well defin'd to be—*Ars sine Arte, cujus Principium est mentiri, medium laborare, & Finit mendicare*.—

From *Motion*, *Matter*, taught that all Things grew,  
 What cannot *Motion*, giv'n to *Matter*, do?  
 Vain *Reas'ner*! the fantastic Search give o'er,  
 Or first—go—analyze the painted *Flow'r*—  
 If long intent to sep'rate and compound—  
 To pay thy *Toil* a *gen'ral Flow'r* be found,  
 The *Grand Elixir* Thou mayst hope to boast,  
 Nor find, in search of *Gold*, thy *Labour* lost.

THE *Triumph*, still, is o'er *Effects* alone,  
 Nor were *Diseases* in their *Causes* known,  
 Till first *Immortal Harvey* led the way,  
 And pointed where their secret *Sources* lay;  
 All that the *Wise* had *sketch'd* in distant *Thought*,  
 The Godlike *Harvey* saw—and *prov'd*—and taught—  
 While *others*, dubious, *hint* the Blood to *flow*,  
 'Twas his, \* *alone*, to trace the Manner, *how*,  
 And in what *Time*, its rapid *Journey* done,  
 Fresh from the *Heart*, again its *Race* is run.

Hence

\* THE *Circulation* of the *Blood* has been generally allow'd to have been found out in the Year 1628, by *Harvey*, a Physician of our own Country; tho' there are several who dispute that *Honour* with him, such as *Vander Linden*, in *Holland*—*Realdus Columbus*, of *Cremona*; and *Andreas Cæsalpinus*, at *Venice*.—This Notion has, indeed, been *occasionally*, and slightly treated by *Them*, as an *Hypothesis*, but never *demonstrated* till *Harvey's Time*.



Hence *Physic*, to no slavish *Sect* confin'd,  
 Gave all her Bigot-Systems to the Wind :  
 To nobler *Heights* her tow'ring *Head* she rears ;  
 The growing Labour of Three Thousand Years !  
 The *Queen* of *Science* rival *Nations* great,  
 And lay their fairest *Trophies* at her *Feet* :  
 The \* *Tubes*--the *Glands*--*These* foremost to *explain*  
 The *Muscles*, *These* expound--and *Those* the *Brain*.—  
 While others pore thro' *Microscopic Glafs*,  
 And see the † *Lymph* thro' subtle *Strainers* pass—  
 From *Sense*, not wild *Hypothesis*, deduce  
 The *Structure* of each *Vessel*--and its *Use*.  
 ‡ *Mechanic* and *Botanic Science* join  
 Their wond'rous *Aids* to make the *Art Divine* ;

From

\* THESE several *Discoveries* in *Anatomy* are owing to *Wharton*---*Willis*---*Brown*, and others, since *Harvey's Time*.----

† MALPHIGI was the first *Discoverer* of the *Lymphatic Vessels*, which, according to *Dr. Arbuthnot*, are one hundred times finer than a *Hair*---He died *Anno 1694*.--

‡ MEDICINE, by late Improvements in *Philosophy*, is become all *Mechanical*, and *Corpuscular* ; instead of *Galen's Qualities* and *Degrees*, every thing is now reduc'd to *Mechanical Affections* ; to the *Figures*, *Bulks*, *Gravities*, &c. of the component *Particles*, and to the great *Principle of Attraction*.----

From *East* to *West*, hence *Physic* boasts her *Sway* —  
 And darts on all a more propitious *Ray* ;  
 But fix'd her *Throne* in fair *Britannia's Isle*,  
 To whom she owes a *Harvey* — and a \* *Boyle*.

\* THE Honourable Mr. Boyle rescued *Chymistry* from the *Censures* it had long lain under from the *Enthusiasm* of *Helmont* and *Paracelsus*, and has shewn of what infinite *Use* it is to *Philosophy* and *Medicine*, when kept within its proper *Bounds*.—He first discover'd, or, at least, brought the *Pneumatic Engine* to *Perfection*, which soon demonstrated the *Abfurdity* of that common Notion, that *Nature* abhor'd a *Vacuum*.—Since he has shewn us the true *Origin* of *Qualities* in *Bodies*, nobody has dar'd to advance the Chimærical Notion of *Substantial Forms*.—By the Help of *these*, and other valuable *Discoveries*, many *others* have been made since his *Death*, and many more, probably, will be ; and his *Reputation* rather increase than diminish in future *Ages*.—He died *Anno* 1691.—

N.B. IF it should be ask'd why I have made no honourable Mention of the *Royal Society*— I have This to answer—That the *Subject* has been too copiously and elegantly treated by † *another Hand*, for me to add any thing but my *Wishes* for their *Prosperity*.

† SPRAT'S History of the Royal Society.

F I N I S.

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